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FROM THE DESK OF  
ROBERT S. MCNAMARA

Monday, March 28, 1994

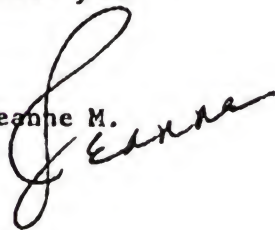
Dear Dr. Bob:

Mr. McNamara asked that I send the enclosed paper along to you. Please note that this is a Draft Copy and is not to be distributed or quoted until after the May 19, 1994 delivery date.

Also, if you do distribute any copies, would you please let us know to whom?

Thank you.

Jeanne M.



Dr. Robert Livingston

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## The Emperor Has No Clothes

With respect to nuclear weapons, "The Emperor Has No Clothes." He never has had clothes and he never will have clothes. If by the end of my remarks, my message is not clear, it can be the subject of the Question and Answer period.

Let me begin by reminding you that last year Presidents Yeltsin and Bush agreed to what might be called START II, substantial reductions in nuclear forces below the levels of START I. There are today approximately 40,000 nuclear warheads in the world, with a destructive power over 1 million times that of the Hiroshima bomb. Assuming that the reductions called for by START II are implemented, the stock of nuclear warheads of the five existing nuclear powers would be reduced to approximately 9 thousand weapons by the year 2003. The danger of nuclear war -- the risk of destruction of societies across the globe -- will have been lowered but not eliminated. I don't believe anyone in this room could tell the difference between a world in which there had been an exchange of 9,000 warheads vs one in which 40,000 were fired. Can we not go further? Surely the answer must be Yes.

If there was ever reason to doubt that conclusion, it should have been swept away by recent disclosures of how close the world came to nuclear disaster during the Cuban Missile Crisis. It is widely recognized that the actions of the Soviet Union, Cuba, and the United States brought these nations to the verge of military conflict in October 1962. But what was not known then, and is not widely recognized today, was how close the world came to the brink of nuclear disaster. Neither the Soviet Union, nor Cuba, nor the United States intended, by its actions,

to create such risks. In order to understand what caused the crisis and how to avoid such events in the future, participants in the decisions relating to it have met together in a series of conferences. A meeting chaired by Fidel Castro in Havana, Cuba, in January 1992 was the fifth. Some of the lessons learned from those meetings remain so applicable today, I want to quickly summarize the discussions for you.

By the conclusion of the third meeting, in Moscow in January 1989, it had become clear that the decisions of each of the three nations, immediately before and during the crisis, had been distorted by misinformation, miscalculation, and misjudgment. I shall cite only four of many examples.

First: Before Soviet missiles were introduced into Cuba in the summer of 1962, the Soviet Union and Cuba believed the United States intended to invade the island in order to overthrow President Castro and remove his government. As I shall discuss more fully below, we had no such intention.

Second: The United States believed the Soviets would not move nuclear warheads outside the Soviet Union -- they never had -- but in fact they did. In Moscow, we were told that by October 1962, although the CIA at the time was reporting no nuclear weapons on the island, Soviet strategic nuclear warheads had, indeed, been delivered to Cuba, and their missiles were to be targeted on cities in the United States.

Third: The Soviets believed the missiles could be introduced into Cuba secretly, without detection, and that when their presence was disclosed, the United States would not respond. Here, too, they were in error.

Fourth: Those who urged President Kennedy to destroy the missiles by a US air attack, which in all likelihood would have been followed by a sea and land invasion, were almost certainly mistaken in their belief that the Soviets would not respond with military action. At the time, the CIA had reported 10,000 Soviet



troops in Cuba. At the Moscow conference, participants were told there were in fact 43,000, along with 270,000 well-armed Cuban troops. Both forces, in the words of their commanders, were determined to "fight to the death." The Cuban officials estimated they would have suffered 100,000 casualties. The Soviets expressed utter disbelief that we would have thought that, in the face of such a catastrophic defeat, they would not have responded militarily somewhere in the world. The result would very probably have been uncontrollable escalation.

By the end of our meeting in Moscow, I believe we had agreed we could draw two major lessons from our discussions: First, in this age of high-technology weapons, crisis management is dangerous, difficult, and uncertain. Due to misjudgment, misinformation, and miscalculation of the kind I have referred to, it is not possible to predict with confidence the consequences of military action between the Great Powers and their allies. Therefore, we must direct our attention to crisis avoidance.

Some of us -- particularly President Kennedy and I -- believed that the United States faced great danger during the missile crisis. The Moscow meeting confirmed that judgment. But during the Havana conference, we learned that we had greatly underestimated the danger.

While in Havana, we were told by the senior military officer in the Russian delegation, the retired former Chief of Staff of the Warsaw Pact, General Gribkov, that the Soviet forces in Cuba, at the peak of the crisis, possessed not only nuclear warheads for the intermediate-range missiles capable of striking the United States, but tactical nuclear warheads, as well. These were to be used against US invasion forces. All of this at a time, as I mentioned previously, the CIA was reporting no warheads on the island.

Later we learned that in November 1992 there was published in the Russian press an article<sup>1</sup> which stated that at the height of the crisis, the Soviet forces on the Island possessed a total of 162 nuclear warheads, including at least 90 tactical warheads. Moreover, it was reported that on October 26, 1962 the moment of greatest tension, in anticipation of a US invasion, warheads were moved from their storage sites to positions closer to their delivery vehicles. When Malinovsky, the Russian Defense Minister, received a cable from General Pliyev, the Soviet Commander in Cuba, informing him of the action, he sent it to Khrushchev. Khrushchev returned it with "Approved" scrawled across the face of the document.<sup>2</sup> Clearly there was a high risk that in the face of a US attack -- which many in the US government, military and civilian alike, were recommending to President Kennedy on October 27 and 28 -- the Soviet forces would have decided to use the nuclear weapons rather than lose them.

We need not speculate about what would have happened in that event. We can predict the results with certainty.

Although the US forces would not have been accompanied by tactical nuclear warheads, no one should believe that had US troops been attacked with such weapons, the United States would have refrained from a nuclear response. And where would it have ended? In utter disaster.

The point I wish to emphasize is this: human beings are fallible. We all make mistakes. In our daily lives they are costly, but we try to learn from them. In conventional war they cost lives, sometimes thousands of lives. But if they were to affect decisions relating to the use of nuclear forces, they would result in the destruction of nations. I believe, therefore, that it can be predicted with confidence

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<sup>1</sup>"Afterword to Sensation" 100 Day Nuclear Cruise by Lt. Col. Anatoly Dokochaev, Krasnaya Zvezda, November 6, 1992, p2.

<sup>2</sup>An interview with General Volkogonov by V. Badurkin "Operation Anadyr" Trud, 10/27/92. p3.



that the indefinite combination of human fallibility and nuclear weapons carries a high risk of destruction of societies.

More and more political and military leaders are accepting that basic changes in the world's approach to nuclear weapons are required. Some are going so far as to state that the long-term objective should be to return, insofar as practical, to a non-nuclear world.

That is, however, a very controversial proposition. Many leading Western security experts -- both military and civilian-- continue to believe that the threat of the use of nuclear weapons prevents war. Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Advisor, has said with reference to a proposal for eliminating nuclear weapons: "It is a plan for making the world safe for conventional warfare. I am therefore not enthusiastic about it."<sup>3</sup> A report of an Advisory Committee, appointed by the former US Secretary of Defense, Richard Cheney, and chaired by Tom Reed, a former Secretary of the Air Force, made essentially the same point.<sup>4</sup> However, even if one accepts their argument, it must be recognized that their deterrent to conventional force aggression carries a very high long-term cost: the risk of a nuclear exchange.

John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State in the Eisenhower Administration, recognized this problem nearly forty years ago. He proposed, therefore, to "universalize the capacity of atomic thermonuclear weapons to deter aggression" by transferring control of nuclear forces to a veto-less United Nations Security Council.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>John J. Fialks and Frederick Kemps, "US Welcomes Soviet Arms Plan, but Dismisses Pact as Propaganda," *Wall Street Journal*, 1/17/86.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas C. Reed and Michael O. Wheeler "The Role of Nuclear Weapons in the New World Order," December 1991.

<sup>5</sup>John Lewis Gaddis, "John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War," Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Dulles' concern of 1954 has been echoed in recent years by a number of other security experts. I doubt that you are aware of their statements. Let me quickly summarize them for you.

First I will refer to three reports:

1. A committee of the US National Academy of Sciences, in a report signed by General David C. Jones, the retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated "nuclear weapons should serve no purpose beyond the deterrence of -- nuclear attack by others."<sup>6</sup> The Committee believed US and Russian nuclear forces could be reduced to 1,000 to 2,000 warheads.
2. The Spring 1993 edition of *Foreign Affairs* carried an article signed by another retired Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Crowe, which concluded that by the year 2000 the US and Russia could reduce strategic forces to 1,000 to 1,500 warheads each. The article added "Nor is 1,000-1,500 the lowest level obtainable by the early 21st Century."
3. Last August, General Andrew Goodpaster, the former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO Forces in Europe, published a report<sup>7</sup> in which he said the five existing nuclear powers should be able to reduce nuclear weapons stockpiles "to no more than 200 each" and "the ultimate would be a 'zero level'" [emphasis in the original].

These three reports should not have come as surprises. For nearly twenty years, Western military and civilian security experts have been expressing doubts

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<sup>6</sup>National Academy of Sciences "The Future of the US-Soviet Nuclear Relationship" Washington, DC, 1991, p3.

<sup>7</sup>"Further Reins on Nuclear Arms: Next Steps by Nuclear Powers" by Andrew J. Goodpaster, Atlantic Council, Washington, DC, 8/93.



about the military utility of nuclear weapons. But they have spoken so softly that few are aware of their remarks. This is what they have said:

1. By 1982, following retirement, five of the seven officers who had served as Chief of the British Defense Staff had indicated their belief that initiating the use of nuclear weapons, in accordance with NATO policy, would lead to disaster.<sup>8</sup> Lord Mountbatten, Chief from 1959 to 1965, said in 1979, a few months before he was murdered, "As a military man I can see no use for any nuclear weapons --." And Field Marshall Lord Carver, Chief from 1973 to 1976, wrote in The Sunday Times of February 21, 1982 that he was totally opposed to NATO ever initiating the use of nuclear weapons.
2. Admiral Noel Gaylor, former Commander-in-Chief of US Ground, Air and Sea Forces in the Pacific is quoted in "*The Congressional Record*" of July 1, 1981 as saying: "There is no sensible military use of any of our nuclear forces. The only reasonable use is to deter our opponents from using his nuclear forces."
3. Melvin Laird, Secretary of Defense in the Nixon Administration, was reported in "*The Washington Post*" of 4/12/82 as saying: "A worldwide zero nuclear option with adequate verification should now be our goal --. These weapons -- are useless for military purposes."

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<sup>8</sup>Solly Zuckerman, "Nuclear Illusions and Reality," Viking, NY, 1982, p70.



4. Helmut Schmidt stated in 1987, in a BBC interview: "Flexible response [NATO's strategy calling for the use of nuclear weapons] is nonsense. Not out of date, but nonsense ---. The Western idea, which was created in the 1950's, that we should be willing to use nuclear weapons first, in order to make up for our so-called conventional deficiency, has never convinced me."<sup>9</sup>
5. General Larry Welsh, retired Chief of the US Air Force and previously Commander of the Strategic Air Command, has put the same thought in these words: "Deterrence depended on someone believing that you would commit an act totally irrational if done."<sup>10</sup>

In the early 1960's, I reached conclusions similar to those which I have just reported. At that time, in long private conversations, first with President Kennedy and later with President Johnson, I recommended, without qualification, that they never initiate, under any circumstances, the use of nuclear weapons. I believe they accepted my recommendations.<sup>11</sup>

With totally contradictory views, regarding the role of nuclear weapons, held by the Brzezinski's and Reed's on the one hand and the Schmidt's and Laird's on the other, should we not begin immediately to debate the merits of alternative long-term objectives for the nuclear forces of the five declared nuclear powers. We could choose from among three options:

1. A continuation of the present strategy of "extended deterrence," but with the US and Russia each limited to approximately 3,500

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<sup>9</sup>An interview on BBC radio with Stuart Simon, 7/16/87.

<sup>10</sup>Welsh's statement 3/21/94 to Adam Scheinman for use by RMcN.

<sup>11</sup>*Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1983, p79.

warheads, the figure agreed upon by Presidents Yeltsin and Bush.

- or 2. A minimum deterrent force -- as recommended by the committee of the US National Academy of Sciences and supported by Admiral Crowe -- with each of the two major nuclear powers retaining 1,000 to 2,000 warheads.
- or 3. As I strongly advocate, a return, insofar as practicable, to a non-nuclear world.

If we dare break out of the mind set that has guided the nuclear strategy of the Western World for over four decades, I believe "we can clothe the emperor" and put the genie back in the bottle. I pray God we do so.